POETRY OF THE GATHERED YEARS

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POETRY OF THE GATHERED YEARS



POETRY OF THE GATHERED YEARS

COMPILED BY

M. H.

Before me, even as behind, God is, and all is well! J. G. WHITTIES.



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THE SOUL'S YOUTH.

Spendthrift, sighing for lost youth,
Sighs will not that waste restore;
More the gain than loss, in sooth;
Youth was something: life is more.

Little our first glances saw —

Eager, quick, unsatisfied,—

Scorning beauty for its flaw,—

Earth irreverently was eyed;

Earth, whose onward paths we tread,
Garden of the gods to-day;
Light the years that hither led,
Opening whither, none can say.

Living now is worth the while;

Time leaves treasures as he goes.

Old Earth wears a sunset-smile —

Flush of heaven's half-opened rose.

Eden-lore that childhood knew
Fresh through life is whispered yet;
Pearl-drops of perennial dew
On the sheaves of age are set.

Souls are younger than the skies; From the leal heart fades no truth. We grow old? 'T is Death that dies; Our eternity is youth.

LUCY LARCOM.

SEPTEMBER—THIRTY-FIVE



POETRY OF THE GATHERED YEARS.

SEPTEMBER.

O GOLDEN month! How high thy gold is heaped!

The yellow birch-leaves shine like bright coins strung

On wands; the chestnut's yellow pennons tongue
To every wind its harvest challenge. Steeped
In yellow, still lie fields where wheat was reaped;
And yellow still the corn sheaves, stacked among
The yellow gourds, which from the earth have
wrung

Her utmost gold. To highest boughs have leaped The purple grape,—last thing to ripen, late By every reason of its precious cost. O Heart, remember, vintages are lost If grapes do not for freezing night-dews wait.

Think, while thou sunnest thyself in Joy's estate,

Mayhap thou canst not ripen without frost!

Helen Hunt Jackson.

THIRTY-FIVE,

"The years of a man's life are threescore and ten."

O WEARY heart! thou'rt half-way home!
We stand on Life's meridian height —
As far from childhood's morning come
As to the grave's forgetful night.
Give Youth and Hope a parting tear —
Look onward with a placid brow —
Hope promised but to bring us here,
And Reason takes the guidance now; —

One backward look,—the last,—the last!
One silent tear — for Youth is past!

Who goes with Hope and Passion back?

Who comes with me and Memory on?

Oh, lonely looks the downward track—

Joy's music hushed—Hope's roses gone!

To Pleasure and her giddy troop

Farewell, without a sigh or tear!

But heart gives way and spirits droop,

To think that Love may leave us here!

Have we no charm when Youth is flown—

Midway to death left sad and lone!

Yet stay!—as 't were a twilight star

That sends its thread across the wave,

I see a brightening light, from far,

Steal down a path beyond the grave!

And now,—bless God! its golden line

Comes o'er—and lights my shadowy way,—

And shows the dear hand clasped in mine!

But list! what those sweet voices say!

The better land's in sight,

Bless God for its pure light!

True love from life's midway's not driven!

Chief, hers whose claspèd hand will bring thee on to Heaven.

N. P. Willis.

THIRTY-FIVE.

THE sun hangs calm at summer's poise;
The earth lies bathed in shimmering noon
At rest from all her cheerful noise,
With heart-strings silently in tune.
A traveller through the noonday calm,
Not weary, yet in love with rest,
Glad of the air's refreshing balm,
Stays where you threshold waits a guest.
Here at the half-way house of life,
Upon these summer highlands raised,
Her thoughts are quieted from strife,
Peace grows wherever she has gazed.
Thus on she looks with thoughts that sing
Of happy months that follow June;

Life were not a completed thing,
Without its summer afternoon.

The time to bless and to be blest,

For gathering and bestowing fruit,

When grapes are waiting to be pressed,

And storms have fixed the trees' firm roots.

The traveller girds her to depart;

She turns her towards the setting sun;
With morning's freshness in her heart,
Her evening journey is begun.

Lucy Larcom.

EQUINOCTIAL.

THE sun of life has crossed the line;

The summer-shine of lengthened light
Faded and failed, till where I stand
'T is equal day and equal night.

One after one, as dwindling hours,

Youth's glowing hopes have dropped away,

And soon may barely leave the gleam

That coldly scores a winter's day.

I am not young, I am not old;

The flush of morn, the sunset calm,
Paling and deepening, each to each,

Meet midway with a solemn charm.

One side I see the summer fields

Not yet disrobed of all their green;

While westerly along the hills

Flame the first tints of frosty sheen.

Ah, middle point, where cloud and storm

Make battle-ground of this, my life!

Where, even-matched, the night and day

Wage round me their September strife!

I bow me to the threatening gale;
I know when that is overpast,
Among the peaceful harvest days
An Indian Summer comes at last!

Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney.

FROM DAWN TO NOON.

AS the child knows not if his mother's face

Be fair; nor of his elders yet can deem

What each most is; but as of hill or stream

At dawn, all glimmering life surrounds his place:

Who yet, toward noon of his half-weary race,

Pausing awhile beneath the high sun-beam

And gazing steadily back,— as through a dream,
In things long past new features now can trace,—

Even so the thought that is at length full grown

Turns back to note the sun-smit paths, all gray

And marvellous once, where first it walked alone;

And haply doubts, amid the unblenching day,

Which most or least impelled its onward way,—

Those unknown things or these things overknown.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

INCOMPLETENESS.

NOTHING resting in its own completeness

Can have worth or beauty; but alone

Because it leads and tends to farther sweetness,

Fuller, higher, deeper than its own.

Spring's real glory dwells not in the meaning,
Gracious though it be, of her blue hours;
But is hidden in her tender leaning
To the Summer's richer wealth of flowers.

Dawn is fair, because the mists fade slowly

Into Day, which floods the world with light;
Twilight's mystery is so sweet and holy

Just because it ends in starry Night.

Childhood's smiles unconscious graces borrow From strife, that in a far-off future lies; And angel glances (veiled now by Life's sorrow)

Draw our hearts to some beloved eyes.

Life is only bright when it proceedeth

Towards a truer, deeper Life above;

Human Love is sweetest when it leadeth

To a more divine and perfect Love.

Learn the mystery of Progression duly;

Do not call each glorious change Decay;
But know we only hold our treasures truly,

When it seems as if they passed away.

Nor dare to blame God's gifts for incompleteness; In that want their beauty lies; they roll Towards some infinite depth of love and sweetness, Bearing onward man's reluctant soul.

Adelaide Procter.

PAST TIMES.

OLD Acquaintance, shall the nights
You and I once talked together
Be forgot like common things,—
Like some dreary night that brings
Naught, save foul weather?

We were young, when you and I
Talked of golden things together,—
Of love and rhyme, of books and men;
Ah! our hearts were buoyant then
As the wild-goose feather!

Twenty years have fled, we know,

Bringing care and changing weather;
But hath the heart no backward flights,
That we again may see those nights,
And laugh together?

Jove's eagle, soaring to the sun,

Renews the past year's mouldering feather;

Ah, why not you and I, then, soar

From age to youth,—and dream once more

Long nights together?

Barry Cornwall.

THE PAST.

THIS common field, this little brook,—
What is there hidden in these two,
That I so often on them look,

Oftener than on the heavens blue?

No beauty lies upon the field;

Small music doth the river yield;

And yet I look and look again,

With something of a pleasant pain.

'T is thirty—can it be thirty years,

Since last I stood upon this plank,

Which o'er the brook its figure rears,

And watched the pobbles as they san

And watched the pebbles as they sank?
How white the stream! I still remember
Its margin glassed by hoar December,
And how the sun fell on the snow;
Ah! can it be so long ago?

It cometh back; — so blithe, so bright,

It hurries to my eager ken,

As though but one short winter's night

Had darkened o'er the world since then.

It is the same clear, dazzling scene; —

Perhaps the grass is scarce as green;

Perhaps the river's troubled voice

Doth not so plainly say,—'Rejoice.'

Yet Nature surely never ranges,

Ne'er quits her gay and flowery crown;
But, ever joyful, merely changes

The primrose for the thistle-down.

'T is we alone who, waxing old,
Look on her with an aspect cold,
Dissolve her in our burning tears,
Or clothe her with the mists of years!

Then why should not the grass be green?

And why should not the river's song

Be merry,—as they both have been
When I was here an urchin strong?
Ah, true,—too true! I see the sun
Through thirty winter years hath run,
For grave eyes, mirrored in the brook,
Usurp the urchin's laughing look!

So be it! I have lost,— and won!

For once, the past was poor to me,—
The future dim; and though the sun
Shed life and strength, and I was free,
I felt not — knew no grateful pleasure;
All seemed but as the common measure;
But now,— the experienced spirit old
Turns all the leaden past to gold!

Barry Cornwall.

LOSS AND GAIN.

LIFE grows better every day,

If we live in deed and truth;

So I am not used to grieve

For the vanished joys of youth.

For though early hopes may die,

Early dreams be rudely crossed;

Of the past we still can keep

Treasures more than we have lost.

For if we but try to gain

Life's best good and hold it fast,

We grow very rich in love

Ere our mortal days are past.

Rich in golden stores of thought,

Hopes that give us wealth untold;

Rich in all sweet memories,

That grow dearer, growing old.

For when we have lived and loved,

Tasted suffering and bliss,

All the common things of life

Have been sanctified by this.

What my eyes behold to-day

Of this good world is not all,

Earth and sky are crowded full

Of the beauties they recall.

When I watch the sunset now,

All its glories change and glow,
I can see the light of suns

That were faded long ago.

When I look up to the stars, I find burning overhead All the stars that ever shone

In the nights that now are dead.

And a loving, tender word,

Dropping from the lips of truth,

Brings each dear remembered tone

Echoing backward from my youth.

When I meet a human face,

Lit for me with light divine,
I recall all loving eyes

That have ever answered mine.

Therefore, they who were my friends

Never can be changed or old;

For the beauty of their youth

Fond remembrance well can hold.

And even they whose feet here crossed O'er the noiseless, calm abyss, To the better shore which seemed Once so far away from this;

Are to me as dwelling now

Just across a pleasant stream,

Over which they come and go,

As we journey in a dream.

Phæbe Cary.

EXPECTANCY.

PERPETUAL dawn makes glorious all hills;
Perpetual altar-feast sets fresh shew-bread;
Perpetual symphony swells overhead;
Perpetual revelation pours and fills
For every eye and ear and soul which wills
And waits, with will and waiting which are wed
Into true harmony, like that which led
The forces under which, with silent thrills,
Earth's subtle life began.

Ah, on the brink
Of each new age of great eternity, I think,
After the ages have all countless grown,
Our souls will poise and launch with eager wing,
Forgetting blessedness already known,
In sweet impatience for God's next good thing.

Helen Hunt Jackson.

SIXTEEN.

SUPPOSE your hand with power supplied,—
Say, would you slip it 'neath my hair,
And turn it to the golden side
Of sixteen years? Suppose you dare?

And I stood here with smiling mouth,

Red cheeks, and hands all softly white,
Exceeding beautiful with youth,

And that some sly, consenting sprite

Brought dreams as bright as dreams can be,

To keep the shadows from my brow,

And plucked down hearts to pleasure me,

As you would roses from a bough;

What could I do then? idly wear—
While all my mates went in before—
The bashful looks and golden hair
Of sixteen years, and nothing more!

Nay, done with youth is my desire,

To Time I give no false abuse,

Experience is the marvellous fire

That welds our knowledge into use.

And all its fires of heart, or brain,

Where purpose into power was wrought,
I'd bear, and gladly bear again,

Rather than be put back one thought.

So sigh no more, my gentle friend,

That I have reached the time of day

When white hairs come, and heart-beats send

No blushes through the cheeks astray.

For, could you mould my destiny
As clay within your loving hand,
I'd leave my youth's sweet company,
And suffer back to where I stand.

Alice Cary.

CONTENT.

' WHAT wouldst thou be?'
A wavelet just rising from life's wide sea.
I would I were once again a child,
Like a laughing floweret on mountains wild;
In the fairy realms of fancy dwelling,
The golden moments for sunbeams selling;
Ever counting on bright to-morrows,
And knowing naught of unspoken sorrows.

Such would I be,

A sparkling cascade of untiring glee.'

Not so, not so!

For longings change as the full years flow.

When I had but taken a step or two

From the fairy regions still in view;

While their playful breezes fanned me still

At every pause on the steeper hill,

And the blossoms showered from every shoot,
Showered and fell, and yet no fruit,—

It was grief and pain
That I never could be a child again.

Not so, not so!

Back to my life-dawn I would not go.

A little is lost, but more is won,

As the sterner work of the day is done.

We forget that the troubles of childish days

Were once gigantic in morning haze.

There is less of fancy, but more of truth,

For we lose the mists with the dew of youth;

And a rose is born

On many a spray which seemed only thorn.

Not so, not so!

While the years of childhood glided slow,

There was all to receive, and nothing to give;

Is it not better for others to live?

And happier far than the merriest games
Is the joy of our new and nobler aims;
Then fair fresh flowers, now lasting gems;
Then wreaths for a day, but now diadems,

Forever to shine Bright in the radiance of Love Divine.

Not so, not so!

I would not again be a child, I know!
But were it not pleasant again to stand
On the border-line of that fairy land,—
Feeling so buoyant and blithe and strong,
Fearing no slip as we bound along,
Halting at will in the sunshine to bask,
Deeming the journey an easy task,

While Courage and Hope Smooth with 'Come, see and conquer' each emerald slope?

Not so, not so!

Less leaping flame, but a deeper glow!

There is more of sorrow, but more of joy,
Less glittering ore, but less alloy;
There is more of pain, but more of balm,
And less of pleasure, but more of calm;
Many a hope all spent and dead,
But higher and brighter hopes instead;
Less risked, more won;

Less planned and dreamed, but perhaps more done.

Not so, not so!

Not in stature and learning alone we grow.

Though we no more look from year to year

For power of mind more strong and clear,

Though the table-land of life we tread,

No widening view before us spread,

No sunlit summits to lure ambition,

But only the path of a daily mission,

We would not turn

Where the will-o'-the-wisp of our young dreams

Then be it so!

For in better things we yet may grow.

Onward and upward still our way,

With the joy of progress from day to day;

Nearer and nearer every year

To the visions and hopes most true and dear;

Children still of a Father's love,

Children still of a home above!

Thus we look back,

Without a sigh, o'er the lengthening track.

Frances Ridley Havergal.

A SONNET.

THINK not the Past is wise alone,
For Yesterday knows nothing of the Best,
And thou shalt love it only as the nest
Whence glory-winged things to Heaven have flown.
To the great Soul alone are all things known,
Present and future are to her as past,
While she in glorious madness doth forecast
That perfect bud which seems a flower full-blown
To each new Prophet, and yet always opes
Fuller and fuller with each day and hour,
Heartening the soul with odor of fresh hopes,
And longings high and gushings of wide power,
Yet never is or shall be fully blown
Save in the forethought of the Eternal One.

James Russell Lowell.



OCTOBER—TWO SCORE AND TEN



OCTOBER-TWO SCORE AND TEN.

OCTOBER.

SEPTEMBER days were green and fair, But sharp winds pierced the shining air, That froze the dimples of the river, And made the wayside blossom shiver.

September's heart was winter-steeled; The frost lay white upon the field, Day after day; the northern blast Withered the bracken as it passed.

'The time of snow!' we said. Not yet! Flushed with suffusions of regret, Out of the south October came, Setting the forest's heart aflame. Summer returned with her, and still
She lingers with us; stream and hill
And wide fields waver like a dream,
Through warm, soft mist and tender gleam.

Again the gentian dares unfold Blue fringes closed against the cold; Again, in mossy solitudes, The glimmering aster lights the woods.

One mass of sunshine glows the beech; Great oaks, in scarlet drapery, reach Across the crimson blackberry vine, Toward purple ash and sombre pine.

The orange-tinted sassafras

With quaintest foliage strews the grass;

Witch-hazel shakes her gold curls out,

Mid the red maple's flying rout.

Our forests, that so lately stood Like any green familiar wood, Aladdin's fabulous tale repeat; The trees drop jewels at our feet.

With every day some splendor strange! With every hour some subtle change! Of our plain world how could we guess Such miracles of loveliness?

Ah, let the green Septembers go!

They promise more than they bestow;

But now the earth around us seems

Clad in the radiance of our dreams.

Omen of joy to thee and me,

Dear friends, may this rare season be!

Life has not had its perfect test;

Our latest years may be our best.

Heaven's inmost warmth may wait us still, What if, beyond Time's autumn chill, There bless us, ere we hence depart, A glad October of the heart!

Lucy Larcom.

TWO SCORE AND TEN.

ACROSS the sleepy, sun-barred atmosphere
Of the pew-checkered, square old meetinghouse,

Through the high window, I could see and hear

The far crows cawing in the forest boughs.

The earnest preacher talked of Youth and Age:

Life is a book, whose lines are filling fast;

Each word a moment, every year a page,

Till, leaf by leaf, we quickly turn the last.

Even while he spoke, the sunshine's witness crept
By many a fair and many a grizzled head,
Some drooping heavily, as if they slept,
Over the unspelled minutes as they sped.

A boy of twelve, with fancies fresh and strong,

Who found the text no cushion of repose,

Who deemed the shortest sermon far too long,

My thoughts were in the tree-tops with the crows;

Or farther still I soared, upon the back
Of white clouds sailing in the shoreless blue,
Till he recalled me from their dazzling track
To the old meeting-house and high-backed pew.

To eager childhood, as it turns the leaf,

How long and bright the unread page appears!

But to the aged, looking back, how brief,

How brief the tale of half a hundred years!

Over the drowsy pews the preacher's word

Resounded, as he paused to wipe his brows;
I seem to hear it now, as then I heard,

Reëchoing in the hollow meeting-house.

Our youth is gone, and thick and thicker come

The hoary years, like tempest-driven snows;

Flies fast, flies fast, life's wasting pendulum,

And ever faster as it shorter grows.

My mates sat wondering wearily the while

How long before his Lastly would come in,
Or glancing at the girls across the aisle,
Or in some distant corner playing pin.

But in that moment to my inward eyes

A sudden window opened, and I caught

Through dazzling rifts a glimpse of other skies,

The dizzy deeps, the blue abyss of thought.

Beside me sat my father, grave and gray,

And old, so old, at two score years and ten!
I said, 'I will remember him this day,

When I am fifty, if I live till then.

- 'I will remember all I see and hear,

 My very thoughts, and how life seems to me,

 This Sunday morning in my thirteenth year;

 How will it seem when I am old as he?
- 'What is the work that I shall find to do?

 Shall I be worthy of his honored name?

 Poor and obscure? or will my dream come true,

 My secret dream of happiness and fame?'
- Ah me, the years betwixt that hour and this!

 The ancient meeting-house has passed away,
 And in its place a modern edifice

 Invites the well-dressed worshipper to-day.
- With it have passed the well-remembered faces;

 The old are gone, the boys are gray-haired men;

 They too are scattered, strangers fill their places;

 And here I am at two score years and ten!

How strangely, wandering here beside the sea,

The voice of crows in yonder forest boughs,

A cloud, a Sabbath bell, bring back to me

A cloud, a Sabbath bell, bring back to me

That morning in the gaunt old meeting-house!

An oasis amid the desert years,

That golden Sunday smiles as then it smiled;
I see the venerated head; through tears

I see myself, that far-off wondering child!

The pews, the preacher, and the whitewashed wall,
An imaged book, with careless children turning
Its awful pages,—I remember all;
My very thoughts, the questioning and yearning;

The haunting faith, the shadowy superstition,

That I was somehow chosen, the special care
Of Powers that led me through life's changeful vision,

Spirits and Influences of earth and air.

In curious pity of myself, grown wise,

I think what then I was and dared to hope,

And how my poor achievements satirize

The boy's brave dream and happy horoscope.

To see the future flushed with morning fire,

Rosy with banners, bright with beckening spears,

Fresh fields inviting courage and desire,—

This is the glory of our youthful years.

To feel the pettiness of prizes won,

With all our vast ambition; to behold

So much attempted and so little done,—

This is the bitterness of growing old.

Yet why repine? Though soon we care no more

For triumphs which, till won, appear so sweet,

They serve their use, as toys held out before

Beguiled our infancy to try its feet.

Not in rewards, but in the strength to strive,

The blessing lies, and new experience gained;

In daily duties done, hope kept alive,

That Love and Thought are housed and entertained.

So not in vain the struggle, though the prize

Awaiting me was other than it seemed.

My feet have missed the paths of Paradise,

Yet life is even more blessed than I deemed.

Riches I never sought, and have not found,

And Fame has passed me with averted eye;
In creeks and bays my quiet voyage is bound,

While the great world without goes surging by.

No withering envy of another's lot,

Nor nightmare of contention, plagues my rest;

For me alike what is and what is not,

Both what I have and what I lack, are best.

A flower more sacred than far-seen success

Perfumes my solitary path; I find

Sweet compensation in my humbleness,

And reap the harvest of a tranquil mind.

I keep some portion of my early dream;

Brokenly bright, like moonbeams on a river,
It lights my life, a far elusive gleam,

Moves as I move, and leads me on forever.

Our earliest longings prophesy the man,

Our fullest wisdom still enfolds the child;

And in my life I trace that larger plan

Whereby at last all things are reconciled.

The storm-clad years, the years that howl and hasten,

The world, where simple faith soon grows
estranged,

Toil, passion, loss, all things that mold and chasten, Still leave the inmost part of us unchanged. O boy of long ago, whose name I bear,

Small self, half-hidden by the antique pew,

Across the years I see you, sitting there,

Wondering and gazing out into the blue;

And marvel at this sober, gray-haired man

I am or seem! How changed my days, how tame

The wild, swift hopes with which my youth began!

Yet in my inmost self I am the same.

The dreamy soul, too sensitive and shy,

The brooding tenderness for bird and flower,

The old, old wonder at the earth and sky,

And sense of guidance by an Unseen Power,—

These keep perpetual childhood in my heart.

The peaks of age, that looked so bare and cold,

Those peaks and I are still as far apart

As in the years when fifty seemed so old.

Age, that appeared far off a bourne at rest,
Recedes as I advance; the fount of joy
Rises perennial in my grateful breast;
And still, at fifty, I am but a boy.

J. T. Trowbridge.

AN AUTUMN THOUGHT.

The dell

T was a calm October morn.

After a frosty night lay thick with brown

Dead leaves. And still they stirred and fluttered down,

Leaving a fringe against the sky, to tell

Where once that sky had been invisible,

Cloaked by their green luxuriance. And indeed

Mine eyes could notice how the vault thus freed

Grew bright and brighter for each leaf that fell.

So cuts the frost which kills our summer vows,

When shades of bliss we hoped eterne decay,

And all our pleasant leaves are stripped away,

We find what ampler view the frost allows.

Through earthly damps we catch the heavenly day,

And God's truth clearest under cold bare boughs.

Edward Cracroft Lefroy.

A HARVEST HOME.

T is not long since we with happy feet
Stood ankle-deep in grasses, fresh and green;
While in the apple-blossoms, pink and sweet,
The singing birds, with flashing wings, were seen.

It is not long ago — not long ago —
Since the glad winds ran through the tasselled corn;

This way and that way, swaying to and fro,

The golden wheat waited the harvest morn.

Now all the silent fields are brown and bare,

And all the singing birds are gone away;

But peaceful calm is in the hazy air,

And we, content, can watch the sweet decay.

For so the hay is saved, the corn, the wheat,

The honey from a thousand scented bowers,

While russet apples, delicately sweet,

Hang where once hung the pink-white apple

So we in our life's autumn stilly muse

Upon the harvest of our gathered years,

Finding the hopes that once we feared to lose

Grown perfect through our toil and love and tears.

And saying, gratefully, 'Although their flower

Was strangely fair and sweet, from cup to root,
'T was best they changed with us from hour to hour,

For better than the Blossom is—the Fruit.'

Mary A. Barr.

THE INDIAN SUMMER.

WHAT is there saddening in the autumn leaves? Have they that 'green and yellow melancholy' That the sweet poet spake of?—Had he seen Our variegated woods, when first the frost Turns into beauty all October's charms, When the dread fever quits us, when the storms Of the wild Equinox, with all its wet, Have left the land, as the first deluge left it, With a bright bow of many colors hung Upon the forest tops, he had not sighed.

The moon stays longest for the hunter now;

The trees cast down their fruitage, and the blithe

And busy squirrel hoards his winter store;

While man enjoys the breeze that sweeps along

The bright blue sky above him, and that bends Magnificently all the forest's pride,

Or whispers through the evergreens, and asks,

'What is there saddening in the autumn leaves?'

John Gardner Calkins Brainard.

THE FLIGHT OF YOUTH.

YOUTH, thou art fled,—but where are all the

Which, though with thee they came, and passed with thee,

Should leave a perfume and sweet memory

Of what they have been? — All thy boons and harms

Have perished quite.— Thy oft renewed alarms

Forsake the fluttering echo.— Smiles and tears

Die on my cheek, or, petrified with years,

Show the dull woe which no compassion warms,

The mirth none shares. Yet could a wish, a thought,

Unravel all the complex web of age,—

Could all the characters that Time hath wrought

Be clean effaced from my memorial page

By one short word, the word I would not say; —

I thank my God, because my hairs are gray.

Hartley Coleridge.

AN ANNIVERSARY.

SO long, so short,
So swift, so slow,
Are the years of man
As they come and go!

O love, it was so long ago!
So long, so long that we were young,
And in the cloisters of our hearts
Hope all her joy-bells rung!
So long, so long that since that hour
Full half a lifetime hath gone by—
How ran the days ere first we met,
Belovèd, thou and I?

We had our dreams, no doubt. The dawn

Must still presage the rising sun,

And rose and crimson flush the east

Ere day is well begun.

We had our dreams,—fair shadowy wraiths

That fled when Day's full splendor kissed Our soul's high places, and its winds Swept the vales clear of mist!

So long, so short,
So swift, so slow,
Are the years of man
As they come and go!

O love, it was but yesterday!

Who said it was so long ago.?

How many times the rose hath bloomed,

Why should we care to know?

For it was just as sweet last June,

As dewy fresh, as fair, as red,

As when our first glad Eden knew

The rare perfumes it shed!

O love, it was but yesterday!

If yesterday is far away,

As brightly on the hill-tops lies The sunshine of to-day.

Sing thou, my soul! O heart, be glad!
O circling years, fly swift or slow!

Your ripening harvest shall not fail,

Nor Autumn's utmost glow!

Julia C. R. Dorr.

THE TRANCE OF TIME.

IN childhood, when with eager eyes

The season-measured year I viewed,

All garbed in fairy guise,

Pledged constancy of good.

Spring sang of heaven; the summer flowers

Bade me gaze on, and did not fade;

Even suns o'er autumn's bowers

Heard my strong wish, and staid.

They came and went, the short-lived four;
Yet, as their varying dance they wove,
To my young heart each bore
Its own sure claim of love.

Far different now;—the whirling year
Vainly my dizzy eyes pursue;
And its fair tints appear
All blent in one dusk bue.

Why dwell on rich autumnal lights,

Spring-time, or winter's social ring?

Long days are fireside nights,

Brown autumn is fresh spring.

Then what this world to thee, my heart?

Its gifts nor feed thee nor can bless.

Thou hast no owner's part

In all its fleetingness.

The flame, the storm, the quaking ground,

Earth's joy, earth's terror, nought is thine,
Thou must but hear the sound

Of the still voice divine.

O priceless art! O princely state!

E'en while by sense of change opprest,
Within to antedate

Heaven's Age of fearless rest.

Cardinal Neuman.

THE DAY OF LIFE.

DAY of Life! thine hours are fast advancing,
Faster, one by one!
Brilliant hopes, like diamonds adorning
Dewy meadows, disappear with morning
'Neath the noon-day sun.

Now the mid-day heat and passion burneth,

May my arm be strong,

To plough in Life's broad field beside my neighbor,

Singing with cheerful heart that lightens labor,

The old untiring song!

Cast me gently on the shore at evening,

With the one I love!

May a sun-set golden calm surround us,
Sliding into darkness, where it found us,

Till the dawn above!

Hamilton Aïdé.

A GLANCE BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

IN my warmer youth,
Ere my heart's bloom was soiled and brushed away,
I had great dreams of mighty things to come:
Of conquest; whether by the sword or pen,
I knew not; but some conquest I would have,
Or else swift death; now, wiser grown in years,
I find youth's dreams are but the flutterings
Of those strong wings whereon the soul shall soar
In after time to win a starry throne;
And so I cherish them, for they were lots
Which I, a boy, cast in the helm of Fate.
Now will I draw them, since a man's right hand,
A right hand guided by an earnest soul,
With a true instinct, takes the golden prize
From out a thousand blanks.

James Russell Lowell.

AUTUMN.

WITH what a glory comes and goes the year! The buds of spring, those beautiful harbingers Of sunny skies and cloudless times, enjoy Life's newness, and earth's garniture spread out; And when the silver habit of the clouds Comes down upon the autumn sun, and with A sober gladness the old year takes up His bright inheritance of golden fruits, A pomp and pageant fill the splendid scene, There is a beautiful spirit breathing now Its mellow richness on the clustered trees, And, from a beaker full of richest dyes, Pouring new glory on the autumn woods, And dipping in warm light the pillared clouds. Morn on the mountain, like a summer bird, Lifts up her purple wing, and in the vales The gentle wind, a sweet and passionate wooer,

Kisses the blushing leaf, and stirs up life
Within the solemn woods of ash deep-crimsoned,
And silver beech, and maple yellow-leaved,
Where autumn, like a faint old man, sits down
By the wayside a-weary. Through the trees
The golden robin moves. The purple finch,
That on wild cherry and red cedar feeds,
A winter bird, comes with its plaintive whistle,
And pecks by the witch-hazel, whilst aloud
From cottage roofs the warbling blue-bird sings,
And merrily with oft-repeated stroke,
Sounds from the threshing-floor the busy flail.

Oh, what a glory doth this world put on

For him who, with a fervent heart, goes forth
Under the bright and glorious sky, and looks
On duties well performed, and days well spent!

For him the wind, aye, and the yellow leaves
Shall have a voice, and give him eloquent teachings.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

$THE \ RIVER.$

AN ALLEGORY OF LIFE.

I.

SON of the mountain am I,
Born 'twixt the Earth and the Sky,
Where kindly cherished I lay
In my cradle of soft mossy green,
Looking with clear bright eye
On the clouds that curtained the day,
Floating in freakish display
With cerulean glimpses between.

Son of the mountain am I,

Born 'twixt the Earth and the Sky,
Where the old grey rocks stand out
'Mid the tempest's revel and rout,
Snorting with jagged old snout

At the keen wind whistling by;
Where the eagle spreads his van,
And the white-winged ptarmigan —

Fed by rich dews from the sky

There an infant of might I did lie.

II.

Young was I, and lusty-hearted, When first from the mountain I started, Down from the Ben's grev shoulders Over the old granite boulders, Scornful of rest and of ease, Eagerly running and leaping, Scooping the rocks with my sweeping, Tearing the roots of the trees; Swelling with torrent big-breasted, Dashing with stream foamy-crested Mighty and masterful then; Heaving and hurling, Whirling and swirling O'er the harsh roots of the Ben; Foaming and bubbling, Winding and doubling

Through the long stretch of the glen,
So lusty was I,
Son of Earth and of Sky,
So proud of my potency then!

III.

Now I am grown to a River,

With measured and equable strain
Rolling my waters, and never

To toss and to tumble again,
I am grown to a smooth-flooded River,
The mighty and merciful Giver

Of wealth to the sons of the plain.
Through meadows and terraces pleasant

In triumph of culture I ride,
With the home of the peer and the peasant

To bless the rich roll of my tide;
The firm-poised bridge I flow under,

The fair-builded city I know,
And spires, domes, and turrets, a wonder,

Nod their pride in my glass as I go;
And high-tunnelled vessels are streaming
With quick-eyed dispatch at my side,
And millions are praising the River,
As he regally rolls to the main,
The mighty and merciful Giver
Of wealth to the sons of the plain.

John Stuart Blackie.

NOVEMBER—THREE SCORE



NOVEMBER-THREE SCORE.

DOWN TO SLEEP.

NOVEMBER woods are bare and still; November days are clear and bright; Each noon burns up the morning's chill; The morning's snow is gone by night; Each day my steps grow slow, grow light, As through the woods I reverent creep, Watching all things lie 'down to sleep.'

I never knew before what beds,
Fragrant to smell and soft to touch,
The forest sifts and shapes and spreads;
I never knew before how much
Of human sound there is in such
Low tones as through the forest sweep
When all wild things lie 'down to sleep.'

Each day I find new coverlids

Tucked in, and more sweet eyes shut tight;

Sometimes the viewless mother bids

Her ferns kneel down, full in my sight;

I hear their chorus of 'good night';

And half I smile, and half I weep,

Listening while they lie 'down to sleep.'

November woods are bare and still;
November days are bright and good;
Life's noon burns up life's morning chill;
Life's night rests feet which long have stood;
Some warm soft bed, in field or wood,
The mother will not fail to keep,
Where we can lay us 'down to sleep.'

Helen Hunt Jackson.

THREE SCORE YEARS.

AT twenty far, far up the height

A Vision burst upon my sight.

And starting forth with youthful zeal

I bounded o'er the fields of Spring,

With Strength my staff and Health my king,

Nor saw the shadows downward steal.

At forty, with more cautious steps,
I journeyed through Temptation's depths —
Above, the Vision day by day,
Below, sweet Love stood by my side,
Though thorns and briars multiplied
And rest from care still far away.

At sixty, toiling up the height,

The mists roll by;—clear to my sight

Stands forth the Vision of my youth.

No more I stumble, fall or creep,

God with me on this mountain steep

Reveals the Presence and — 't is TRUTH.

C. G. Harger, Jr.

TWILIGHT.

THERE is an evening twilight of the heart
When its wild passion-waves are lulled to rest,
And the eye sees life's fairy scenes depart,
As fades the day-beam in the rosy west.
'T is with a nameless feeling of regret
We gaze upon them as they melt away,
And fondly would we bid them linger yet,
But Hope is round us with her angel lay,
Hailing afar some happier moonlight hour;
Dear are her whispers still, though lost their early
power.

In youth the cheek was crimsoned with her glow;

Her smile was loveliest then; her matin song

Was heaven's own music, and the note of woe

Was all unheard her sunny bowers among.

Life's little word of bliss was newly born;

We knew not, cared not, it was born to die,

Flushed with the cool breeze and the dews of morn,

With dancing heart we gazed on the pure sky,

And mocked the passing clouds that dimmed its blue,

Like our own sorrows then,— as fleeting and as few.

And manhood felt her sway too,—on the eye,

Half realized, her early dreams burst bright,
Her promised bower of happiness seemed nigh,

Its days of joy, its vigils of delight;

And though at times might lower the thunderstorm,

And the red lightnings threaten, still the air
Was balmy with her breath, and her loved form,
The rainbow of the heart was hovering there.
'T is in life's noontide she is nearest seen,
Her wreath the summer flower, her robe of

summer green.

But though less dazzling in her twilight dress,

There's more of heaven's pure beam about her

now:

That angel-smile of tranquil loveliness,

Which the heart worships, glowing on her brow;

That smile shall brighten the dim evening star

That points our destined tomb, nor e'er depart
Till the faint light of life is fled afar,

And hushed the last deep beating of the heart;

The meteor-bearer of our parting breath,

A moonbeam in the midnight cloud of death.

Fitz-Greene Halleck.

THE RETURN OF YOUTH.

MY friend, thou sorrowest for thy golden prime;
For thy fair youthful years too swift of flight;
Thou musest, with wet eyes, upon the time
Of cheerful hopes that filled the world with light,
Years when thy heart was bold, thy hand was strong,
And quick the thought that moved thy tongue
to speak,

And willing faith was thine, and scorn of wrong Summoned the sudden crimson to thy cheek.

Thou lookest forward on the coming days,

Shuddering to feel their shadow o'er thee creep;
A path thick-set with changes and decays,

Slopes downward to the place of common sleep;
And they who walked with thee in life's first stage

Leave one by one thy side, and, waiting near,

- Thou seest the sad companions of thy age Dull love of rest, and weariness, and fear.
- Yet grieve thou not, nor think thy youth is gone,

 Nor deem that glorious season e'er could die;

 Thy pleasant youth, a little while withdrawn,

 Waits on the horizon of a brighter sky;

 Waits, like the morn, that folds her wings and hides
- Till the slow stars bring back her dawning hour; Waits, like the vanish'd spring, that slumbering bides
 - Her own sweet time to waken bud and flower.
- There shall he welcome thee, when thou shalt stand
 On his bright morning hills, with smiles more
 sweet
- Than when at first he took thee by the hand,

 Through the fair earth to lead thy tender feet.
- He shall bring back, but brighter, broader still, Life's early glory to thine eyes again,

Shall clothe thy spirit with new strength, and fill Thy leaping heart with warmer love than then.

Hast thou not glimpses, in the twilight here,

Of mountains where immortal morn prevails?

Comes there not, through the silence, to thine ear

A gentle rustling of the morning gales;

A murmur, wafted from that glorious shore,

Of streams that water banks forever fair,

And voices of the loved ones gone before,

More musical in that celestial air?

William Cullen Bryant.

YOUTH RENEWED.

SPRING flowers, spring birds, spring breezes
Are felt, and heard, and seen;
Light trembling transport seizes
My heart,— with sighs between;
These old enchantments fill the mind
With scenes and seasons far behind;
Childhood, its smiles and tears,
Youth with its flush of years,
Its morning cloud and dewy prime,
More exquisitely touched by Time.

Fancies again are springing,
Like May-flowers in the vales;
While hopes, long lost, are singing,
From thorns, like nightingales;
And kindly spirits stir my blood,
Like vernal airs that curl the flood;

There falls to manhood's lot
A joy, which youth has not,
A dream, more beautiful than truth,—
Returning Spring renewing youth.

Thus sweetly to surrender
The present for the past;
In sprightly mood, yet tender,
Life's burden down to cast,—
This is to taste, from stage to stage,
Youth in the lees refined by age;
Like wine well kept and long,
Heady, nor harsh, nor strong,
With every annual cup, is quaffed
A richer, purer, mellower draught.

James Montgomery.

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me in the days departed, How often underneath the sun With childless bounds I used to run To a garden long deserted.

I called the place my wilderness,

For no one entered there but I.

The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,

And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,

And spread their boughs enough about

To keep both sheep and shepherd out,

But not a happy child.

My childhood from my life is parted, My footstep from the moss, which drew Its fairy circle round; anew The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are:
No more for me! myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought
'The time will pass away.'

And still I laughed and did not fear But that, whene'er was past away The childish time, some happier play My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away, And yet, beside the rose-tree wall, Dear God, how seldom, if at all, Did I look up to pray!

The time is past; and now that grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
The color draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for heavenly promise free,
That I, who was, would shrink to be
That happy child again.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

INDIAN SUMMER.

SUMMER is gone; but summer days return;

The winds and frosts have stripped the woodlands bare,

Save for some clinging foliage here and there.

Now as if, pitiful, her heart did yearn,

Nature, the loving Mother, lifts her urn,

And pours the stream of life to her spent child; The desert air grows strangely soft and mild,

And in his veins the long-fled ardors burn.

So when are past the mid-years of our lives,

And, sad or glad, we feel our work is done,

There comes to us with sudden swift returns

The glow, the thrill that show life still survives.

That — though through softening mists—still shines the sun,

And in our souls the Indian Summer burns.

Samuel Longfellow.

GROW NOT OLD.

NEVER, my heart, wilt thou grow old!

My hair is white, my blood runs cold,

And one by one my powers depart;

But youth sits smiling in my heart.

Downhill the path of age? Oh, no!

Up, up, with patient steps I go;

I watch the skies fast brightening there;
I breath a sweeter purer air.

Beside my road small tasks spring up, Though but to hand the cooling cup, Speak the true word of hearty cheer, Tell the lone soul that God is near.

Beat on, my heart, and grow not old!

And when thy pulses all are told,

Let me, though working, loving still,

Kneel as I meet my Father's will.

Mrs. Louisa J. Hall.

TO OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

WHAT has the Calendar to do	
With poets? What Time's fruitless toot	h
With gay immortals such as you	
Whose years but emphasize your youth?	

Nay, let the foolish records be
That make believe you're seventy-five;
You're the old Wendell still to me,—
And that's the youngest man alive.

James Russell Lowell.

A DEDICATION.

DEAR, near and true—no truer Time himself Can prove you, though he make you evermore Dearer and nearer, as the rapid of life Shoots to the fall—take this, and pray that he, Who wrote it, honoring your sweet faith in him, May trust himself; and spite of praise and scorn, As one who feels the immeasurable world, Attain the wise indifference of the wise; And after Autumn past—if left to pass His autumn into seeming-leafless days—Draw toward the long frost and longest night, Wearing his wisdom lightly, like the fruit Which in our winter woodland looks a flower.

Alfred Tennyson.

AGE AND SONG.

N vain men tell us time can alter Old loves, or make old memories falter;

That with the old year the old year's life closes.

The old dew still falls on the old sweet flowers,

The old sun revives the new-fledged hours,

The old summer rears the new-born roses.

Much more a Muse that bears upon her
Raiment and wreath and flower of honor,
Gathered long since and long since woven,
Fades not nor falls as falls the vernal
Blossoms that bear no fruit eternal,
By summer or winter charred or cloven.

No time casts down, no time upraises, Such loves, such memories, and such praises, As need no grace of sun and shower, No saving screen from frost or thunder, To tend and house around and under The imperishable and fearless flower.

Old thanks, old thoughts, old aspirations,

Outlive men's lives and lives of nations,

Dead, but for one thing which survives—

The inalienable and unpriced treasure,

The old joy of power, the old pride of pleasure,

That lives in light above men's lives.

A. C. Swinburne,

SPHINX.

WHY mourn we for the golden prime
When our young souls were kingly, strong and true?
The soul is greater than all time,
It changes not, but yet is ever new.

But that the soul is noble, we
Could never know what nobleness had been;
Be what ye dream! and earth shall see
A greater greatness than she e'er hath seen.

The flower pines not to be fair,

It never asketh to be sweet and dear,

But gives itself to sun and air,

And so is fresh and full from year to year.

Nothing in Nature weeps its lot, Nothing, save man, abides in memory, Forgetful that the Past is what Ourselves may choose the coming time to be.

All things are circular; the Past
Was given us to make the Future great;
And the void Future shall at last
Be the strong rudder of an after fate.

We sit beside the Sphinx of Life,
We gaze into its void, unanswering eyes,
And spend ourselves in idle strife
To read the riddle of their mysteries.

Arise! be earnest and be strong!

The Sphinx's eyes shall suddenly grow clear,

And speak as plain to thee ere long,

As the dear maidens who hold thee most dear.

The meaning of all things in us —
Yea, in the lives we give our souls — doth lie;

Make, then, their meaning glorious By such a life as need not fear to die!

There is no heart-beat in the day,
Which bears a record of the smallest deed,
But holds within its faith alway
That which in doubt we vainly strive to read-

One seed contains another seed,

And that a third, and so for evermore;

And promise of as great a deed

Lies folded in the deed that went before.

So ask not fitting space or time,

Yet could not dream of things which could not be;

Each day shall make the next sublime,

And Time be swallowed in Eternity.

James Russell Lowell.

HOPES AND MEMORIES.

OUR hopes in youth are like those roseate shadows
Cast by sunlight on the dewy grass
When first the fair morn opes her sapphire eyes;
They seem gigantic and yet graceful shades,
Touched with bright color. As our sun of life
Rises toward meridian, less and less
Grow the bright tremulous shadows, till at last,
In the hot dust and noon-tide of our day,
They glimmer to blank nothingness. Again
That grand climacteric passed, the shadows gleam
Bright still, perchance (if our past deeds be pure),—
Bright still, but all reversed! Eastward they point,
Lengthening and lengthening ever toward the dawn;
For hopes have then grown memories, whose strange
life

Deepens and deepens as the sunset dies.

Paul Hamilton Hayne.







DECEMBER-SEVEN TIMES ELEVEN.

DECEMBER, THE CLEAR VISION.

I DID but dream. I never knew
What charms our sternest season wore.
Was never yet the sky so blue,
Was never earth so white before.
Till now I never saw the glow
Of sunset on you hills of snow,
And never learned the bough's designs
Of beauty in its leafless lines.

Did ever such a morning break

As that my eastern windows see?

Did ever such a moonlight take

Weird photographs of shrub and tree?

Rang ever bells so wild and fleet

The music of the winter street?

Was ever yet a sound by half So merry as yon school-boy's laugh?

O Earth! with gladness overfraught,

No added charm thy face hath found;

Within my heart the change is wrought,

My footsteps make enchanted ground. From couch of pain and curtained room Forth to thy light and air I come,
To find in all that meets my eyes
The freshness of a glad surprise.

Fair seem these winter days, and soon

Shall blow the warm west winds of spring

To set the unbound rills in tune

And hither urge the bluebird's wing.

The vales shall laugh in flowers, the woods
Grow misty green with leafing buds,
And violets and wind-flowers sway,
Against the throbbing heart of May.

Break forth, my lips, in praise and own
The wiser love severely kind;
Since, richer for its chastening grown,
I see, whereas I once was blind.
The world, O Father! hath not wronged
With loss the life by thee prolonged;
But still, with every added year,
More beautiful thy works appear!

As thou hast made thy world without,

Make thou more fair my world within;

Shine through its lingering clouds of doubt;

Rebuke its haunting shapes of sin;

Fill, brief, or long, my granted span

Of life with love to thee and man;

Strike when thou wilt the hour of rest,

But let my last days be my best!

John Greenleaf Whittier.

SEVEN TIMES ELEVEN.

FROM seven times one the tender song went on
To seven times seven, and there made end;
But so, thank God, it has not been with thee
And thy good years, O dear and blessed friend!

Thy seven times eight had past ere first I knew
The kindly welcome of thy pleasant face;
Thy seven times nine beheld thee full of years,
But yet more full of gentleness and grace.

Then came the goal,—the threescore years and ten;
Still sang thy heart its sweet and natural song;
'Labor and sorrow?' Nay to thee I deem
Labor and joy forevermore belong.

For thou hast ever found thy sweetest joy

In simple tasks of love and friendliness;

Finding, like one to me forever dear,

That naught is easier than to cheer and bless.

And so thy seven times eleven comes

And finds thee laboring and loving still;
Striving, ere yet the day is wholly done,
To fit thy task yet closer to His will.

Work on, love on, in sorrow yet in joy;

Another song of seven live to sing

Ere, life well spent, thy winter turn at last

To sudden freshness like this month of spring.

John W. Chadwick.

RABBI BEN EZRA.

GROW old along with me!

The best is yet to be,

The last of life, for which the first was made;

Our times are in His hand

Who saith, 'A whole I planned,

Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be

afraid!'

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed, 'Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall!'
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned, 'Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!'

Not for such hopes and fears

Annulling youth's brief years,

Do I remonstrate; folly wide the mark!

Rather I prize the doubt

Low kinds exist without,

Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,

Were man but formed to feed

On joy, to solely seek and find and feast,

Such feasting ended, then

As sure an end to men;

Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the mawcrammed heast?

Rejoice we are allied

To That which doth provide

And not partake, effect and not receive!

A spark disturbs our clod;

Nearer we hold of God

Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge

n, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence,—a parodox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail;
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me;
A brute I might have been, but would not sink
i' the scale.

What is he but a brute

Whose flesh hath soul to suit,

Whose spirit works lest arm and legs want play?

To man, propose this test -

Thy body at its best,

How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use;

I own the Past profuse

Of power each side, perfection every turn;

Eyes, ears took in their dole,

Brain treasured up the whole;

Should not the heart beat once, 'How good to live and learn?'

Not once beat 'Praise be thine!

I see the whole design,

I, who saw power, see now love perfect too,

Perfect I call thy plan;

Thanks that I was a man!

Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!'

For pleasant is this flesh;

Our soul, in its rose-mesh

Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;

Would we some prize might hold

To match those manifold

Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say

'Spite of this flesh to-day

I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!'

As the bird wings and sings,

Let us cry 'All good things

Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now than flesh helps soul!'

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its turn
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God tho' in the germ.

And I shall thereupon

Take rest, ere I be gone

Once more on my adventure brave and new;

Fearless and unperplexed,

When I wage battle next,

What weapons to select, what armor to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try

My gain or loss thereby;

Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold;

And I shall weigh the same,

Give life its praise or blame;

Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For, note when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray;
A whisper from the west
Shoots—'Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth; here dies another day.'

So, still within this life,

Though lifted o'er its strife,

Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,

'This rage was right i' the main,

That acquiescence vain;

The Future I may face now I have proved the Past.'

For more is not reserved

To man, with soul just nerved

To act to-morrow what he learns to-day;

Here, work enough to watch

The Master work, and catch

Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth

Should strive, through acts uncouth,

Toward making, than repose on aught found made;

So, better, age, exempt

From strife, should know, than tempt

Further, Thou waitedst age! Wait death, nor be afraid!

Enough now, if the Right

And Good and Infinite

Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,

With knowledge absolute,

Subject to no dispute

From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be thee, for once and all,

Severed great minds from small,

Announced to each his station in the Past!

Was I, the world arraigned, Were they, my soul disdained,

Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now who shall arbitrate?

Ten men love what I hate,

Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;

Ten, who in ears and eyes

Match me; we all surmise,

They, this thing, and I, that; whom shall my soul believe?

Not on the vulgar mass

Called 'work' must sentence pass,

Things done that took the eye and had the price;

O'er which, from level stand,

The low world laid its hand,

Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice;

But all the world's coarse thumb

And finger failed to plumb,

So passed in making up the main account;

All instincts immature,

All purposes unsure,

That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount;

Thoughts hardly to be packed

Into a narrow act.

Fancies that broke through language and escaped;

All I could never be,

All, men ignored in me,

This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Aye, note that Potter's wheel,

That metaphor! and feel

Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,-

Thou to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,

'Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!'

Fool! All that is, at all,

Lasts ever, past recall;

Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure;

What entered into thee,

That was, is, and shall be;

Time's wheel runs back or stops; Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance

Of plastic circumstance,

This Present, Thou, for sooth, wouldst fain arrest;

Machinery just meant

To give thy soul its bent,

Try thee, and turn thee forth sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!

To uses of a cup,

The festal board, lamp's flash, and trumpet's peal.

The new wine's foaming flow

The Master's lips aglow!

Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,

Thee, God, who mouldest men!

And since, not even while the whirl was worst,

Did I,—to the wheel of life

With shapes and colors rife,

Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy

thirst;

So, take and use Thy work,

Amend what flaws may lurk,

What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!

My times be in Thy hand!

Perfect the cup as planned!

Let age approve of youth, and death complete the

same!

Robert Browning.

THE GOLDEN WEDDING.

BY THE ELDEST GRANDSON.

A RAINBOW span of fifty years,
Painted upon a cloud of tears,
In blue for hopes and red for fears,
Finds end in a golden hour to-day.
Ah, you to our childhood the legend told,
'At the end of the rainbow lies the gold,'
And now in our thrilling hearts we hold
The gold that will never pass away

Gold crushed from the quartz of a crystal life,
Gold hammered with blows of human strife,
Gold burnt in the love of man and wife,
Till it is pure as the very flame;
Gold that the miser will not have,
Gold that is good beyond the grave,
Gold that the patient and the brave
Amass, neglecting praise and blame.

O golden hour that caps the time Since, heart to heart like rhyme to rhyme, You stood and listened to the chime

Of inner bells by spirits rung,

That tinkled many a secret sweet

Concerning how two souls should meet,

And whispered of Time's flying feet

With a most piquant silver tongue.

O golden day,—a golden crown

For the kingly heads that bowed not down

To win a smile or 'scape a frown,

Except the smile and frown of Heaven!

Dear heads, still dark with raven hair;

Dear hearts, still white in spite of care;

Dear eyes, still black and bright and fair

As any eyes to mortals given!

Old parents of a restless race, You miss full many a bonny face That would have smiled a filial grace
Around your Golden Wedding wine.
But God is good and God is great,
His will be done, if soon or late,
Your dead stand happy in yon Gate
And call you blessed while they shine.

So, drop the tear and dry the eyes.

Your rainbow glitters in the skies.

Here's golden wine; young, old, arise;

With cups as full as our souls, we say:

'Two Hearts, that wrought with smiles thro' tears
This rainbow span of fifty years,

Behold how true, true love appears

True gold for your Golden Wedding day!'

Sidney Lanier.

A LEGACY.

FRIEND of my many years!

When the great silence falls, at last, on me,

Let me not leave to pain and sadden thee

A memory of tears,

But pleasant thoughts alone

Of one who was thy friendship's honored guest

And drank the wine of consolation pressed

From sorrows of thy own.

I leave with thee a sense

Of hands upheld and trials rendered less—

The unselfish joy which is to helpfulness

Its own great recompense;

The knowledge that from thine, As from the garments of the Master, stole

Calmness and strength, the virtue which makes whole

And heals without a sign;

Yea, more, the assurance strong

That love, which fails of perfect utterance here,

Lives on to fill the heavenly atmosphere

With its immortal song.

John Greenleaf Whittier.
(In "The Independent.")

TO JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

DEAR singer of our fathers' day,
Who lingerest in the sunset glow,
Our grateful hearts all bid thee stay;
Bend hitherward and do not go.
Gracious thine age; thy youth was strong,
For Freedom touched thy tongue with fire;
To sing the right and fight the wrong
Thine equal hand held bow or lyre.
O linger, linger long,
Singer of song.

We beg thee stay; thy comrade star

Which later rose is earlier set;

What music and what battle scar

When side by side the fray ye met!

Thy trumpet and his drum and fife

Gave saucy challenge to the foe

In Liberty's heroic strife;

We mourn for him, thou must not go!

Yet linger, linger long,

Singer of song.

We cannot yield thee; only thou
Art left to us, and one beside
Whose silvered wisdom still can show
How smiles and tears together bide.
And we would bring our boys to thee,
And bid them hold in memory crowned
That they our saintliest bard did see,
The Galahad of our table round.
Then linger, linger long,
Singer of song.

The night is dark; three radiant beams

Are gone that crossed the zenith sky;

For one the waterfowl, meseems,

For two the Elmwood herons cry.

Ye twain that early rose and still
Skirt low the level west along,
Sink when ye must, to rise and fill
The morrow's east with light and song.
But linger, linger long,
Singer of song.

William Hayes Ward.
(In "The Independent.")

GROWING OLD.

SOFTLY, oh softly, the years have swept by thee,
Touching thee lightly, with tenderest care;
Sorrow and death they have often brought nigh thee,
Yet they have left thee but beauty to wear;
Growing old gracefully,
Gracefully fair.

Far from the storms that are lashing the ocean,

Nearer each day to the pleasant Home-light;

Far from the waves that are big with commotion,

Under full sail, and the harbor in sight;

Growing old cheerfully,

Cheerful and bright.

Past all the winds that were adverse and chilling, Past all the islands that lured thee to rest, Past all the currents that lured thee unwilling,

Far from thy course to the Land of the Blest:

Growing old peacefully,

Peaceful and blest.

Never a feeling of envy nor sorrow

When the bright faces of children are seen;

Never a year from the young wouldst thou borrow—

Thou dost remember what lieth between;

Growing old willingly,

Thankful, serene.

Rich in experience that angels might covet,

Rich in a faith that hath grown with each year,
Rich in a love that grew from and above it,

Soothing thy sorrows and hushing each fear;

Growing old wealthily,

Loving and dear.

Hearts at the sound of thy coming are lightened,
Ready and willing thy hand to relieve;

Many a face at thy kind word has brightened—

It is more blessed to give than receive.

Growing old happily,

Ceasing to grieve.

Eyes that grow dim to the earth and its glory,

Have a sweet recompense youth can not know;

Ears that grow dull to the world and its story

Drink in the songs that from Paradise flow;

Growing old graciously,

Purer than snow.

BURNING DRIFT-WOOD.

BEFORE my drift-wood fire I sit, And see, with every waif I burn, Old dreams and fancies coloring it, And folly's unlaid ghosts return.

O ships of mine, whose swift keels cleft

The enchanted sea on which they sailed,

Are these poor fragments only left

Of vain desires and hopes that failed?

Did I not watch from them the light
Of sunset on my towers of Spain,
And see, far off, uploom in sight,
The Happy Isles I might not gain?

Did sudden lift of fog reveal

Arcadia's vales of song and Spring,

And did I pass, with grazing keel,

The rocks whereon the sirens sing?

Have I not drifted hard upon

The unmapped regions lost to man,

The cloud-pitched tents of Prester John,

The palace domes of Kubla Khan?

Did land winds blow from jasmin flowers,

Where Youth the ageless Fountain fills?

Did Love make sign from rose blown bowers,

And Gold from Eldorado's hills?

Alas! the gallant ships, that sailed
On blind Adventure's errand sent,
Howe'er they laid their courses, failed
To reach the haven of Content.

And of my ventures, those alone

Which Love had freighted, safely sped;

Seeking a good beyond my own, By clear-eyed Duty piloted.

O mariners, hoping still to meet

The luck Arabian voyagers met,

And find in Bagdad's moon-lit street

Haroun al Raschid walking yet!

Take with you on your Sea of Dreams,

The fair, fond fancies dear to youth;
I turn from all that only seems,

And seek the sober grounds of truth.

What matter that it is not May,

That birds have flown, and trees are bare;

That darker grows the shortening day,

And colder blows the wintry air!

The wrecks of passion and desire,

The castles I no more rebuild,—

May fitly feed my drift-wood fire,

And warm the hands that age has chilled.

Whatever perished with my ships,

I only know the best remains;

A song of praise is on my lips

For losses which are now my gains.

Heap high my hearth! No worth is lost;

No wisdom with the folly dies.

Burn on, poor shreds, your holocaust

Shall be my evening sacrifice!

Far more than all I dared to dream,

Unsought before my door I see;

On wings of fire and steeds of steam

The world's great wonders come to me.

And holier signs, unmarked before,

Of Love to seek and Power to save,—

The righting of the wronged and poor, The man evolving from the slave.

And life, no longer chance or fate,
Safe in the gracious Fatherhood,
I fold o'er-wearied hands and wait,
In calm assurance of the good.

And well the waiting time must be,

Though brief or long its granted days,

If Faith and Hope and Charity

Sit by my evening hearth-fire's blaze.

And with them, friends whom Heaven has spared,
Whose love my heart has comforted;
And sharing all my joys, has shared
My tender memories of the dead.—

Dear souls who left us lonely here, Bound on their last, long voyage, to whom We, day by day, are drawing near Where every bark has sailing room.

I know the solemn monotone

Of waters calling unto me;
I know from whence the airs have blown
That whisper of the Eternal Sea.

As low my fires of drift-wood burn,

I hear that sea's deep sounds increase;

And fair in sunset light, discern

Its mirage-lifted Isles of Peace.

John Greenleaf Whittier.
(In "The Independent.")

PARTING.

O TELL me, friends, while yet we part,
And heart can yet be heard of heart,
O tell me then, for what is it
Our early plan of life we quit;
From all our own intentions range,
And why does all so wholly change?
O tell me, friends, while yet we part!

O tell me, friends, while yet we part,—
The rays that from the centre start
Within the orb of one warm sun,
Unless I err, have once begun,—
Why is it thus they still diverge?
And whither tends the course they urge?
O tell me friends, while yet we part!

O tell me, friends, while yet ye hear,—
May it not be, some coming year,
These ancient paths that here divide,
Shall yet again run side by side,
And you from there, and I from here,
All on a sudden reappear?
O tell me, friends, while yet ye hear!

O tell me, friends, ye hardly hear,—
And if indeed ye did, I fear
Ye would not say, ye would not speak,—
Are you so strong, am I so weak,
And yet, how much so e'er I yearn,
Can I not follow, nor you turn?
O tell me, friends, ye hardly hear!

O tell me, friends, ere words are o'er,— There's something in me sad and sore Repines, and underneath my eyes I feel a somewhat that would rise,—
O tell me, O my friends, and you,
Do you feel nothing like it too?
O tell me, friends, ere words are o'er!

O tell me, friends that are no more,
Do you, too, think ere it is o'er,
Old times shall yet come round as erst,
And we be friends, as we were first?
Or do you judge that all is vain,
Except that rule that none complain?
O tell me, friends that are no more!

Arthur Hugh Clough.

SUNSETTING.

YOU say—and sadness dims your eye
The while you say it—that the light
Of morning and of evening sky
Is strangely different to your sight.

You tell me that your folded hands

Are shorn of power to work your will,

Although you feel that life's demands

Press as importunely still.

You sigh that since creation's birth,

When time its measured course began,

Never upon the peopled earth

Had man so much to do for man.

And with clear vision reaching round Its spheric whole, so vast, so broad, Laid open to its utmost bound,

Had man so much to do for God.

Content you — so you did the task

The Master set at morning's prime,

With zeal that never paused to ask

Space for the needed resting time.

You fain would overtax your powers,

And overstep wise Nature's laws;

Be sure this tender God of ours

Knows when and where to make you pause.

Some toiler waits your place to fill,

This day that dies with yonder light

Another day will follow still

With room for radiance just as bright.

You grieve to think you may not see Fulfilled all purposes begun; But does it matter who shall be

The workers, so the work is done?

Turn your full gaze, then, to the west,

That thus its golden luster may

Crown with the aureole of its rest

The evening of your perfect day.

Margaret J. Preston.
(In "The Congregationalist.")

TO AGE.

WELCOME, old friend! These many years
Have we lived door by door;
The Fates have laid aside their shears
Perhaps for some few more.

I was indocile at an age

When better boys were taught,

But thou at length hast made me sage,

If I am sage in aught.

Little I know from other men,

Too little they from me,

But thou hast pointed well the pen

That writes these lines to thee.

Thanks for expelling Fear and Hope, One vile, the other, vain; One's scourge, the other's telescope, I shall not see again;

Rather what lies before my feet
My notice shall engage.
He who braved youth's dizzy heat
Dreads not the frosts of age.

Walter Savage Landor.

IN THE EVENING.

MY love, when life was young, I knew
But little what you were to be,
A light more bounteous to me,
While lengthening shadows grew.
Have I been silent, Love? or cold?
It may be you have little guessed
All the strong love, half-unexpressed,—
Stronger, as I grew old.

But darling, when the day is done,

And we together walk at peace,
In that bright world, where sorrows cease,
Beyond the set of sun;
What best of me you brought to light
On this dark earth, shall there expand

And each shall wholly understand

What now is hid from sight.

Hamilton Aïdé.

ONWARD AND HEAVENWARD.

WOULD you be young again?
So would not I;
One tear to mem'ry given
Onward I'd hie
Life's dark flood forded o'er,
All but at rest on shore,—
Say, would you plunge once more
With home so nigh?

If you might, would you now
Retrace your way?
Wander through stormy wilds,
Faint and astray?
Night's gloomy watches spread,
Morning all beaming red,
Hope's smiles around us shed,
Heavenward — away!

Where, then, are those dear ones,
Our joy and delight?

Dear, and more dear, though now
Hidden from sight,

Where they rejoice to be,
There is the land for me;

Fly time — fly speedily!

Come, life and light!

Lady Nairn.

IN OLD AGE.

Written on my eighty-seventh birthday, Feb. 13, 1892.

WHAT is it now to live? It is to breathe The air of Heaven, behold the pleasant earth, The shining rivers, the inconstant sea, Sublimity of mountains, wealth of clouds, And radiance o'er all of countless stars. It is to sit before the cheerful hearth With groups of friends and kindred, store of books. Rich heritage from ages past, Hold sweet communion, soul with soul. On things now past, or present, or to come, Or muse alone upon my earlier days, Unbind the scroll, wherein is writ The story of my busy life; Mistakes too often, but successes more, And consciousness of duty done. It is to see with laughing eyes the play

Of children sporting on the lawn,

Or mark the eager strifes of men And nations, seeking each and all, Belike advantage to obtain Above their fellows: such is man! It is to feel the pulses quicken, as I hear Of great events near or afar, Whereon may turn perchance The fate of generations, ages hence. It is to rest with folded arms betimes, And so surrounded, so sustained, Ponder on what may yet befall In that unknown mysterious realm Which lies beyond the range of mortal ken, Where souls immortal do forever dwell: Think of the loved ones who await me there, And without murmuring or inward grief, With mind unbroken and no fear, Calmly await the coming of the Lord.

David Dudley Field.
(In "The Independent.")

DOWN THE SLOPE.

WHO knoweth life but questions death
With guessings of that dimmer day
When one is slowly lift from clay
On winged breath?

But man advances; far and high
His forces fly with lightning stroke;
Till, worn with years, his vigor broke,
He turns to die:

When lo! he finds it still a life;

New ministration and new trust.

Along a happy way that's just

Aside from strife,

And all day following friendly feet That lead on bravely to the light, As one walks downward, strong and bright,

The slanted street,—

And feels earth's benedictions wide,

Alike on forest, lake, or town;

Nor marks the slope,—he going down

The sunniest side.

O bounteous natures everywhere!

Perchance at least one did not fear

A change to cross from your love here

To God's love there.

Charlotte P. Hawes.

O LAY THY HAND IN MINE, DEAR.

O LAY thy hand in mine, dear!
We're growing old, we're growing old;
But Time hath brought no sign, dear,
That hearts grow cold, that hearts grow cold.
'T is long, long since our new love
Made life divine, made life divine;
But age enricheth true love,
Like noble wine, like noble wine.

And lay thy cheek to mine, dear,

And take thy rest, and take thy rest;

Mine arms around thee twine, dear,

And make thy nest, and make thy nest.

A many cares are pressing

On this dear head, on this dear head;

But Sorrow's hands in blessing

Are surely laid, are surely laid.

O lean thy life on mine, dear!
'T will shelter thee, 't will shelter thee;
Thou wert a winsome vine, dear,

On my young tree, on my young tree;

And so till boughs are leafless,

And song-birds flown, and song-birds flown, We'll twine, then lay us, griefless,

Together down, together down.

Gerald Massey.

OLD AGE AND DEATH.

THE seas are quiet when the winds give o'er;
So calm are we when passions are no more.
For then we know how vain it was to boast
Of fleeting things too certain to be lost.

Clouds of affection from our younger eyes

Conceal that emptiness which age decries.

The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,

Lets in new light through chinks that time has
made.

Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,
As they draw near to their eternal home.
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
That stand upon the threshold of the new.

Edmund Waller.

LIGHT AT EVENTIDE.

"At evening time it shall be light."-Zech. 14, 7.

DEAR Lord, Thy good and precious book seems written all for me;

Wherever I may open it, I find a word from Thee.

My eyes are dim, but this one verse is pillow for the night,

Thy promise that 'At Evening Time it shall be' surely 'light.'

It was not always light with me; for many a sinful year

I walked in darkness far from Thee; but thou hast brought me near

And washed me in Thy precious blood, and taught me by Thy grace,

And lifted up on my poor soul the brightness of Thy face.

- My Savior died in darkness that I might live in light.
- He closed His eyes in death that mine might have the heavenly sight;
- He gave up all His glory to bring it down to me, And took the sinner's place that He the sinner's

Friend might be.

- His Spirit shines upon His Word, and makes it sweet indeed.
- Just like a shining lamp held up beside me as I read:
- And brings it to my mind again alone upon my bed,
 Till all abroad within my heart the love of God is
 shed.
- I've nearly passed the shadows, and the sorrows here below:
- A little while a little while, and he will come, I know,

And take me to the glory that I think is very near,

Where I shall see Him face to face and His kind

welcome hear.

And now my loving Jesus is my Sight at Eventide,
The welcome Guest that enters in for ever to abide;
He never leaves me in the dark, but leads me all
the way.—

So it is light at Evening Time, and soon it will be \mathbf{Day} !

Frances Ridley Havergal.

LIFE.

LIFE! I know not what thou art, But know that thou and I must part; And when, or how, or where we met, I own to me's a secret yet.

Life! we've been long together

Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;

'T is hard to part when friends are dear,

Perhaps 't will cost a sigh, a tear;

Then steal away, give little warning,

Choose thine own time;

Say not Good Night,—but in some brighter clime

Bid me Good Morning.

Anna S. Barbauld.

PARTING WORDS.

"And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh."—Gen. 32, 26.

LET me go, the day is breaking,
Dear companions, let me go;
We have spent a night of waking
In the wilderness below;
Upward now I bend my way,
Part we hear at break of day.

Let me go, I may not tarry,

Wrestling thus with doubts and fears;

Angels wait my soul to carry,

Where my risen Lord appears;

Friends and kindred, weep not so,

If ye love me, let me go.

We have travelled long together,

Hand in hand, and heart in heart,

Both through fair and stormy weather;
And 'tis hard, 'tis hard to part.

Yet we must; 'Farewell!' to you:

Answer one and all, 'Adieu!'

"T is not darkness gathering round me,
Which withdraws me from your sight;
Walls of flesh no more can bound me,
But, translated into light,
Like the lark on mounting wing,
Though unseen, you hear me sing.

Heaven's broad day hath o'er me broken,
Far beyond earth's span of sky;
Am I dead? — Nay, by this token,
Know that I have ceased to die;
Would you solve the mystery,
Come up hither,—come and see!

James Montgomery.





Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process. Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide Treatment Date: Jan. 2009

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